AN APPEAL

FOR THE

DUE OBSERVANCE

OF THE

FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK,

ISSUED BY

"THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS FOR PENNSYLVANIA, NEW JERSEY, DELAWARE, AND PARTS ADJACENT."

PHILADELPHIA:
TO BE HAD AT FRIENDS' BOOK-STORE,
No. 304 ARCH STREET.

At a Meeting of the Representatives of the Religious Society of Friends in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, etc., held in Philadelphia, by adjournment, the 24th of the 6th month, 1876.

An Essay on the Proper Observance of the First Day of the Week, prepared by the committee appointed for the purpose, being produced and read, was, with a few alterations, approved and adopted.

Taken from the Minutes.

JOSEPH SCATTERGOOD.

AN APPEAL.

SEEING that our highest interests, as well as all true prosperity, are essentially connected with a reverent love and devotion to Him who is not only the bountiful Giver of every good, but who, as Lord of all, rules by His supreme right in the affairs of men, it becomes our duty, and should be among the chief sources of our happiness, to render to Him the tribute of grateful hearts and lives devoted to His service. Recognizing these paramount obligations, men in every age, and under various forms of religion, have been led to crave the Divine blessing and protecting care, as among their most pressing and continual needs. Since all men are accountable beings, and alike the recipients, through the kindness of their Creator, of their many temporal and spiritual blessings, the obligation to love, honor, and obey Him is binding upon all, whether they acknowledge it or not; for "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matt. v. 45.

Under the Mosaic law, the Almighty himself enjoined upon the children of Israel the observance of the seventh day of the week, as especially set apart for Divine worship; and for the better accomplishment of this object, the people were com-

manded to cease from their usual avocations and all unnecessary labor throughout that day. Upon the bringing in of the Christian dispensation, the need for a stated period to be devoted not only to the purposes of religion, but for the needful rest of man and beast from their daily toil, was clearly recognized; and by common consent the First day of the week was early adopted as such by the Christian church.

Nor has the religious world alone united in the effort to preserve the day of rest, as closely connected with the best interests as well as highest duty of man, but civil government, recognizing the same sentiment, has sought to enforce its careful observance by the authority of law.

In the "*Great Law*," passed by the Assembly held at Chester, Penna., December 12th, 1682, soon after William Penn's first landing in this country, the design of which "Code" was declared to be: "That God may have his due, Cæsar his due, and the people their due, so that the best and firmest foundation may be laid for the present and future happiness of both the government and the people of this province," it was thus ordained: "To the end that looseness, irreligion, and atheism may not creep in under the pretence of conscience, in this province, be it further enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that according to the good example of the primitive Christians, and for the ease of the creation, every *first* day of the week, [commonly] called the *Lord's Day*, people shall abstain from their common toil and labor; that whether masters,

parents, children, or servants, they may the better dispose themselves to read the scriptures of truth at home, or to frequent such meetings of religious worship abroad as may best suit their respective persuasions."

Under date of Fourth Mo. 22, 1794, the Legislature of Pennsylvania passed an "Act for the prevention of vice and immorality, and of unlawful gaming, and to restrain disorderly sports and dissipation." This law was re-enacted Fourth Mo. 11, 1845, and is now in force. It provides that "If any person shall do or perform any worldly employment or business whatsoever on the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, works of necessity and charity only excepted, or shall use or practise any unlawful games, hunting, shooting, sport, or diversions whatsoever, on the same day, and be convicted thereof; every such person so offending shall, for every such offence, forfeit and pay four dollars, to be levied by distress; or, in case he or she shall refuse or neglect to pay the said sum, or goods and chattels cannot be found whereof to levy the same by distress, he or she shall suffer six days' imprisonment in the house of correction of the proper county." A proviso is attached, specifying certain necessary employments which are exempted from the operation of the law.

That such an observance has been fraught with incalculable blessings to large communities, can scarcely be denied; while its neglect has been as invariably followed by a general laxity in morals, and a paralyzing influence has been exerted upon

the virtuous efforts of those who seek to elevate the condition of their fellow-men, and promote the spreading of righteousness in the earth. But if profitable and useful labor be forbidden, in order to make way for the serious engagements for which the day in question has been so wisely set apart, can pleasure-seeking, with any propriety or consistency, be substituted therefor, without perverting its whole character, and making it the holiday which it has already become in many parts of Europe, and some other professedly Christian countries?

The Religious Society of Friends, while holding that no day is in itself peculiarly sacred, but that all time should be kept holy to Him "In whom we live, and move, and have our being," (Acts xvii. 28,) has regarded the true Christian Sabbath as consisting in a ceasing from evil, and that close union and communion with Christ in spirit, which is the privilege of the true believer, without regard to time or place, and of which, under the gospel dispensation, all are invited to partake freely. Friends believe, nevertheless, that the careful observance of one day in seven, as more especially devoted to public worship, private retirement, and serious thoughtfulness, as well as quiet rest from the labors of the week, has been productive of most beneficial results, and is to be regarded among the highest privileges of a Christian people.

We have therefore viewed with sorrow and deep anxiety the efforts which have been persistently made in various quarters, and especially at this

time, for the removal of the wholesome restrictions that have long existed in reference to the due observance of the First day of the week. Should the demands now made be acceded to, it needs but little foresight to predict that, with a lowered tone of public sentiment, there will almost necessarily follow, covertly it may be at first, but soon more boldly, the opening of the drinking-saloon, then the theatre, and erelong places of business; until first by evasion, and finally by the repeal of the existing laws on the subject, the legal restraints which have hitherto preserved in great measure the good order and quiet, so befitting the day, will one after another be swept away.

To the laboring class, especially, such a course would be fraught with injurious consequences. The proper observance of the First day of the week is now emphatically the poor man's privilege; but if recreation is to be substituted for the performance of our highest duties, one of the strongest reasons for that observance will be withdrawn; while the covetous employer will soon claim a larger share in the time of his employé, and may do so with little compunction.

Sad indeed would be the reflection if, upon completing the first century of our national existence, there should be found such a lack of religious sentiment among us, as to permit the violation or rescinding of well-tried laws that have proved beneficial to all classes, as well as effective in fostering the better feelings of the

community, and in checking irreligion and vice in their varied forms.

Let it ever be borne in mind that it is not the extent of its territory, nor the enterprise and thrift of its people, nor their superior advancement in science and the arts, that will commend our beloved country to the favor of Heaven. Other nations have in their day equalled, if not exceeded, us in most of these respects; and yet history teaches that their very existence has been blotted from the earth. It is "righteousness" alone that truly "exalteth a nation" (Prov. xiv. 34); while "pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Prov. xvi. 18.)

Earnestly, therefore, do we desire for ourselves, as well as our fellow-citizens of every class, that, remembering with gratitude the signal blessings which have marked this good land as among the most favored of the earth, we shall be quick to recognize the Source from whence they come; and instead of being numbered among "the nations that forget God," (Ps. ix. 17,) we may be conspicuously known as a people walking reverently in His fear, and seeking above all things His favor.